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MORAL EDUCATION: THE TRAINING OF THE TEACHER.*

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ANY consideration of "the task of the teacher" naturally suggests the further problem of "the training of the teacher." It is happily no longer necessary, as it was not many years ago, to plead the importance of training. We have come to believe in the born teacher in the sense only in which we believe in the born doctor or nurse. Some are clearly more fitted by nature for one sort of work than for another, but all need that careful preparation in theory and method, and that guidance and demonstration in practical work, which help to develop in shortened time such power and skill as could otherwise only be attained by long experience and at the expense of those practiced upon.

The problem, however, which now confronts us is not that of the general training of teachers, but rather that of the need for a special preparation for a particular aspect of school work. Some may urge, indeed, that there is no need for special treatment, that the importance of moral education is already sufficiently emphasized in every course of professional training, and that every teacher worthy the name is striving to develop the moral character of the pupils intrusted to his care. But this is true only in a certain restricted sense. The main business of the day school, at least, has been regarded as intellectual and technical education, any ethical influence or training being but incidental. However, there are signs of a complete change of attitude in this respect, and it may almost now be said that moral education has entered on a new phase of existence and that a new demand in reference to it will in future be made upon the schools. No longer is

* A paper read to the Moral Education League at its meeting in London in February, 1909.

it to be carried on, as it were, incidentally, through the influence of the teacher, formation of right habits and the use made of chance occasions which arise in school life for pointing certain moral lessons. We are on the eve of having systematic ethical teaching introduced as a recognized part of every school curriculum. Whereas, in the past, only those who felt a special aptitude for the work took part in it and any attempt at direct moral teaching was regarded more or less in the light of an experiment, in future, ability to give such teaching may be regarded as a necessary part of the equipment, if not of every teacher, at least of a certain proportion of every school staff.

The position with regard to the equipment of such duly qualified teachers is really very grave, much more so than if it were merely a question of the addition of an extra subject to the curriculum.

If, for instance, it was decided that every child should learn French, there might be some difficulty in obtaining a sufficient supply of competent teachers, and for some years to come a certain number of children would be badly taught. Still no very great harm would have been done; life can be well lived without French, and although regrettable, it would not be a very serious matter if some children came to dislike the subject owing to its faulty presentation. But moral and civic instruction being intimately concerned with life and conduct, would almost certainly, in the hands of incompetent teachers, lead to the rousing of contrariant ideas in the minds of the children, with disastrous effect on their future lives.

Moral education is concerned not with one subject amongst many, but with the whole attitude toward life in its manifold relations, and this implies not merely that a certain definite course of direct instruction shall be given, but that every subject shall be so taught as to bring out its moral significance.

It is therefore so obvious that there is an immediate, and probably a rapidly increasing, need for a supply of

teachers trained in the best methods of dealing with this important aspect of school work, that there is some danger of our forgetting that supply does not necessarily or even usually create demand. Nor even does the need, real as it may be, insure that the demand is forthcoming. Many seem to believe that if once training colleges could be induced to take up the question of systematic moral education, its success would be insured. A little reflection will show that this would only be very partially true. Our schools are already staffed, and not only with teachers who have been trained on different lines and who might even be unsympathetic in the matter, but largely with those who have had no systematic training for their profession and who may perhaps be altogether doubtful of the value of any such general or special preparation for teaching work. It is obvious, therefore, that we cannot expect that young teachers, fresh from college, will be able to accomplish much in the schools at first. In most cases they will be under authority, with practically no responsibility in regard to either curriculum or methods, and it is only too probable that long before such responsibility comes to them, they may have lost their first freshness and enthusiasm.

Without, therefore, desiring for one moment to minimize the importance of enlisting the training colleges on the side of moral education, it must be realized that our task neither begins nor ends there. We need to consider the preparation, not only of our future, but also of our present teachers, and we may go farther and say that no real demand for systematic moral education, and teachers to undertake it, can be said to be established until the country is thoroughly roused on the subject, and parents and education authorities combine to insist on its provision.

In considering, therefore, the question of how best to prepare teachers for the task of moral education, we must distinguish carefully between the preparation which may suitably be provided for students in training colleges and

that which is possible and desirable for those already in the teaching profession. Further, it is necessary to note that at the present moment teachers must, as a rule, be given the *material* for moral instruction as well as be trained to use it. Most of them (and this is true of non-teachers also) would own that such ideas as they have in relation to moral and civic life have been picked up, as it were, incidentally and in no special order or connection. No wonder that many shrink from attempting to impart ideas which they only possess in chaotic and imperfect form, and upon which, indeed, they themselves have never been taught to reflect. In years to come when, as we hope, children will have received systematic moral teaching throughout their school career, the state of affairs will be different; but at present both students in training and teachers in the schools really require some regular instruction in ethics and civics before they can be expected to show an interest in or aptitude for giving such instruction. We have then to consider three distinct problems, *viz.*:

1. How to create an effective demand for teachers properly trained to undertake both direct and indirect moral and civic education.
2. How best to prepare students in training colleges for this work.
3. How to help those already in the teaching profession to prepare themselves to meet these new requirements.

1. The demand for a supply of properly equipped teachers must not be confused with the demand for moral education itself. The latter has already arisen and is likely to become more insistent every year, but there is unfortunately a mistaken idea abroad that every teacher can undertake moral and civic instruction, even without any previous preparation. We have already tried to show what might be the disastrous results of such an assumption, and no efforts should be spared to bring home to education authorities, parents and the general

public the extreme importance of having such teaching organized on right lines and placed in the hands of really competent persons from the start. The board of education could exercise pressure in this direction by requiring that every recognized school should have at least one member of its staff fully prepared to undertake the organization and carrying out of such teachings. The Moral Education League can do much also by emphasizing the importance of this demand through public lectures, discussions and the circulation of literature dealing with the matter.

2. Training colleges, even if they desire to do so, will hardly be able to deal effectively with the training problem until some definite encouragement is offered or indeed some pressure is brought to bear on them by the training college regulations and syllabuses of work and examination. The board of education, the universities and other bodies responsible for drawing up such regulations and schemes of study should be approached in order that the necessary changes may be effected.

As few students come to a training college properly equipped with the necessary preliminary knowledge it will be requisite, at least for the present, to provide opportunity for the study of ethical and social problems in relation to education. It is quite unnecessary that the course of study should be severely academic in character. Discussions would prove of more value than set lectures, and students should be encouraged to read and think for themselves. In the present transition stage many training colleges would no doubt welcome offers of an occasional lecture from outside, or of some one to open a debate on social or economic questions from time to time.

We must next consider what real preparation for actual teaching can be given in this connection. In the first place it must be noted that the recognized preparation in child-psychology and general theory of education is of the utmost importance. The teacher who really understands the working of the child-mind and has made a

thorough study of educational theory should be in a position, on the one hand, to avoid rousing contrariant ideas, and on the other to realize the importance of developing moral character and the best means of securing this end.

The general and special methods of giving moral and civic instruction must be studied in the light of educational theory. It is usual to distinguish between direct and indirect instruction, but it is often hard to do so, for certain subjects, *e. g.*, history, may be used both directly and indirectly for the purpose.

Students in training should have opportunity of observing lessons given by competent teachers, and where a demonstration school is attached to the college the full organization of moral and civic education can be studied at first hand.

Actual practice in this kind of teaching should be arranged for in schools of the district. If this were done under proper supervision there might even be considerable demand for short courses of such carefully prepared lessons in schools situated near the college, especially during the next few years before the schools are properly staffed to meet the new demand.

In addition to such training as might be given to all students, training colleges would be well advised to induce some to specialize in this direction. A demand for such specialists for training college demonstration purposes, for organizing and correlating the work in large schools or in groups of schools, and indeed for pioneer work in all directions, may be said to have already arisen, and will be very pressing in the near future. Students who have given particular attention in degree or other academic courses to mental and moral science, sociology and education or some of these, might with advantage both to themselves and the cause of moral education be induced to devote themselves to such specialist work. Indeed, there are few ways in which training colleges (both secondary and elementary) could give more present effective help than in preparing and sending out for work a body of

such specially trained teachers, who would be able to inspire confidence, demonstrate clearly what can be done, foster and help to organize the tentative efforts of the first critical years and help to guard against the making of serious mistakes.

While dealing with the question of training college work it may be desirable just to touch upon what is felt by many to be a serious difficulty, *viz.*, the relation of moral to religious training. Those colleges which give and prepare teachers to give definite religious instruction, may at first tend to regard purely moral and civic education in the light of a competitor if not of a supplanter. That this is not the case is apparent when one reflects that the truly religious life must be founded upon and can, indeed, only reach its full perfection on a foundation of the moral and civic virtues. There can be no antagonism between the moral and religious life, but rather each supports the other. Those colleges, on the other hand, which are restrained by constitution or charter from giving religious instruction, should welcome such an aid to right living and serious purpose in life and work as will be afforded by the careful study of ethical principles and their application. Such study should go far to counteract any danger of over-emphasis of the intellect at the expense of the emotions and the will, and to restore the balance between academic preparation and the problems of real life.

3. With regard to those already in the teaching profession, the all-important task before us is that of rousing them to real enthusiasm on the subject. If once this could be done, the rest would follow, for these teachers being for the most part either trained and experienced, or at least one of these, they only need to become thoroughly interested in this new view of moral education in order to achieve more or less success in giving it effect. Lectures and demonstration lessons followed by discussions should be arranged for where possible, and education authorities might usefully provide such opportunities for their teachers.

Reading and discussion circles for the study of questions relating to ethics and citizenship might be organized even in country districts and need not be confined to teachers only; indeed, they would often prove of more interest and value if others were encouraged to join. Summer schools, organized at garden cities and elsewhere, could be arranged so as to afford opportunities for both theoretical and practical work, and at the same time interchange of thought amongst those interested in ethical education and who, coming from different parts, perhaps even from foreign countries, would have varied views and experiences to contribute. Short vacation training courses might also be conducted either at such summer schools or at some of the training colleges. These might be usefully subsidized by education authorities, either directly or by granting exhibitions for the purpose to their teachers.

The need of wisely increasing the literature of the subject must not be forgotten. More books are required both for students in training and for teachers already at work, and it is of the utmost importance that this literature should be of the very best. If only we could rouse our foremost thinkers and writers on ethics, sociology and education to take up the matter seriously, we should soon have the necessary books to help forward this great attempt to raise the whole moral life of the nation. Without a sound attractive and varied literature the movement lacks one of the greatest elements of success. Even the few books we already have need to be more widely known, and further efforts should be made to circulate and make them available to teachers all over the country.

In these various ways we may hope to secure a band of skillful and enthusiastic teachers who will promote the cause of moral education and share in the building of that great temple of a perfected humanity which, in all its glorious beauty, we as yet realize but in dreams or see as in a vision from afar.

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